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ABSTRACT

Two concurrent developments have led to widespread shifts in the directions of structured intramural programs in higher education. Several universities place an emphasis on student development through administrative leadership training and participation in the governing process of intramural athletic departments. Student duties may include tournament scheduling, game supervision, equipment management, and record keeping. Student advisory councils are being given real authority for decision making. A second trend in sports is a changing attitude toward competitive sport with more emphasis placed on enjoying the sport as a recreational activity rather than working at it with the singular goal of winning. Although it has been found that unstructured play and organized sport can enhance or reinforce good qualities in an individual, there is evidence that negative human qualities are more likely to surface in organized sport than in unstructured play. (JD)

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STRUCTURED INTRAMURALS: SHIFTING VALUES AND DIRECTIONS

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Over the past decade, two concurrent developments have led to widespread shifts in the directions of structured intramural programs in higher education. For one, people with formal training and professional experience have consistently been hired to fill personnel vacancies in departments of intramurals. Trained professionals, as compared to many of the students and ex-coaches of years past, have been more inclined to approach their jobs thoughtfully, questioning long-held positions and practices, and implementing innovative programs. The second development relates to the tight money situation and the consequent emphasis on accountability, which demands an answer to the question: How does intramurals contribute to the mission of an educational institution?

Subsequently, intramural programs have taken two basic directions. At several universities (Indiana, Pittsburgh, Illinois, for example), an emphasis is placed on student development through administrative leadership training and participation in the governing process. Intramural departments hire and train students to perform duties involving officiating, game and facility supervision, and sport management (which might entail tournament scheduling, training and supervision of officials, game supervision, equipment management, and record-keeping for a specific sport). Before each employment period, workshop sessions are held for student personnel, wherein they are taught skills in conflict resolution, assertiveness, problem-solving, communications, and decision-making. The professional guidance and employment experience enhance the possibility for students to improve their leadership and human relations capabilities, senses of responsibility, abilities to think critically and act independently, and so forth (1,2,5).

Student advisory councils for intramurals have existed for many years, but there is a trend toward investing in them a very real authority for decision-making. In controlling programs, students may determine philosophy and structure, regulations, sports rules, standards of conduct, procedures for hearing cases of possible rules violation, and penalties for violations. As well, they sit in judgment of cases brought before them. Experiences with governance probably augment students' appreciation for the validity of differences of opinion, lessens the frequency with which they may jump to conclusions, improves their investigation and analysis skills, and allows them to observe the effects of their decisions.

The second basic direction of intramurals involves a re-structuring of programs in an attempt to alter people's attitudes toward play and their behaviors in it. The intent is to create a peaceful atmosphere of play by discouraging player concentrations on winning. The fundamental requirement is the removal of all extrinsic forces and concerns from the play experience. For team sports, primarily, the elimination of leagues, championships, awards, point systems, and protest procedures must be effected. Of similar importance is the elimination of officials from play, making participants responsible for self-control. It has been observed by some professionals (7,8,15,20) that people who play games under those circumstances habitually exhibit non-aggressive behavior, a genuine enjoyment in activity, a freedom from the pressures to perform well, a caring for the welfare of each other, and a cooperative spirit to make games work. Furthermore, the structure reduces the incidence of high-aggression injuries, eliminates financial expenditures for awards and officials, minimizes tensions between participants and the intramural staff, and produces administrative easements.

There are many intramural programs which offer participants recreational alternatives to their more serious modes of play (7,8,21,25). A review of intramural handbooks reveals that most intramural directors subscribe to the philosophy that a variety of play structures should be offered to satisfy the diverse interests of the student population; but, several employ certain techniques to draw people into what is viewed as the preferable non-aggressive or less-aggressive styles of play. Scheduling systems are sometimes designed to guarantee people who play in the recreational or co-ed leagues more games and more convenient playing times than those who play in the championship leagues. Playoff systems are structured such that all or most teams in a league are eligible for the playoffs, which allows people to play less desperately during the regular season, while concentrating the more aggressive behavior in a shorter time span. Sports rules are modified to reduce physical contact between players, which in turn reduces antagonisms. And, spontaneous participation opportunities are established for those who simply want to show up to play with people who have done likewise (7).

Peaceful play benefits the participant in several ways. Obviously, man has a need for relaxation or stimulation by freeing himself from the stresses

of daily routine. The mental and physical refreshment of periodic play are powerful antidotes to all sorts of health problems and premature death (23). But, many people seemingly misuse their leisure time by "working at play (24)." They practice sports skills and worry about refinements and strategies. They concern themselves with their status amongst other games-players. In so doing, people strive for something that everyone cannot have, because society's imposed standards of success are achievable by only a few. The unsuccessful are subject to feeling various degrees of dissatisfaction, thereby increasing the stress in their lives. Contrast that to the peace of mind fostered by care-free play, wherein the definition of success in sport is altered. Success does not involve the domination of other people. It is simply the participation, the socialization, and the fun. The only losers are the people who don't play, or those who play too seriously. Thus, one of the fundamental paradoxes of the games-playing world is that play is a serious business, precisely because it isn't.

Any games-playing program constitutes play education. In post-school years, it probably influences such things as how and what one plays and how often, with implications toward people's beneficial use of leisure time. Minimally-structured programs take people back to childhood days, when play was spontaneous, was controlled by the players through peer influence, was flexible as to rules of play, and was generally open to whomever wanted to participate, regardless of ability (8). Let alone, kids have fun playing. Highly structured sports programs tend to take the fun out of play; and, because they operate on the basis of extrinsic inducements, they probably discourage physical activity in later life, when extrinsic rewards are absent. Studies by Kleiber (9) and Wankel (26) offer indirect, supportive evidence of that possibility by concluding that intrinsic motivation results in more permanent learning than that which is achieved from external incentive; and intrinsic drive may actually be abated by continual exposure to extrinsic concerns. Also, people who experience some of the negative effects of serious sport (whether it be undue pressure to perform well, a weeding out process, or simply the embarrassing identification of bad players relative to good ones) may be permanently "turned off" to play. In fact, it was discovered, in 1970, that 90 % of those kids involved in the Canadian minor sport system dropped out before the age of 15 years. Before the age of 12, 53 % dropped out (8). A

lifetime of physical activity seems most likely to emanate from participation in play which is free of extrinsic concern, has minimal structure, and elicits pleasant experiences.

Proponents of serious sport seem threatened by the growing number of criticisms leveled at the potentially negative effects that athletic participation has on people. They charge, for instance, that unstructured play is not competitive, that the absence of organized sport in a person's life deprives him or her of the opportunities to develop the character and skills necessary for success in American life, and that any behavioral problems that occur in serious sport can be dealt with through appropriate disciplinary measures.

Those postures can be countered on several grounds. For one thing, there are several difficulties with the discipline approach. Because of the behavior models presented by those involved with professional, interscholastic, and youth athletics, participants expect similar standards of behavior to be tolerated in intramural programs. But, those expectations do not coincide with the behavior that should be associated with an educational institution, and the imposition of higher standards of conduct under intense competitive circumstances would be resisted and be difficult to implement fairly, if at all. Where does one draw the line between what is acceptable and what is not? In the absence of the internal disciplinary structure that is commonly provided by a team coach, how does one identify and bring to justice even half the offenders? Does the intramural staff become a police force? Furthermore, verbal and physical violence should not be the only concerns. There is also such a thing as thought violence -- the suspicion, distrust, and dislike of other people -- which serious competition certainly stimulates, but disciplinary procedures cannot control. The only potential control mechanism for that aspect of violence is the atmosphere of play itself. Even when discipline <u>can</u> be effectively employed against social deviants, it might be illogical. Is it not unjust to structure a program that fosters human conflict, then punish those who act anti-socially? Surely, disciplinary measures against those who misbehave are more justifiable in programs which promote peaceful play, because misbehavior then becomes incongruous with the purpose and tone of the program.

On another matter, the term <u>competition</u> is being misused in current sports discussions, and a clarification is in order. It is incorrect to label unstructured play as being non-competitive, as a natural contrast to the competitive play of organized sport. The intensity of play and efforts of

players determine the degree to which a game is competitive; and they can be just as strong or weak amongst players in a spontaneously organized game as players in a highly organized game. So, the appropriate terminology in differentiating between the two styles of play could be unstructured play and organized sport rather than competitive and non-competitive.

A person who has character possesses such qualities as honesty, integrity, self-discipline, poise, persistence, and courage. The supposition that sports participation develops those qualities within an individual is largely unfounded. Ogilvie and Tutko conducted a major study in this area, and they found that those who do well in life do so with or without sports participation, because they were initially talented. The character of the ideal athlete is not formed by sport; rather, it is the consequence of a natural selection process (17). In another study, Werner and Gottheil recorded the personality traits of cadets at the U.S. Military Academy, once upon entrance and once upon graduation. As is required by the academy, all cadets participated in physical training and either varsity or intramural sports. The diversity of cadet personality traits was found to be unchanged after four years; so, sports participation did not influence character (28).

There is no evidence to substantiate the claim that a person's chances for success in life are enhanced by participation in sport (3,4). Why should they be? Does an accountant master his trade by playing ping pong? What happens to all the people who don't participate in athletics? Abe Lincoln seemed to do all right without having played Little League baseball. Two University of Texas psychologists, testing scientists, students, and business school graduates, found that "competitiveness" did not correlate strongly with successful work experiencen. They concluded that "a strong need to live up to internally imposed standards of excellence, combined with a willingness to work hard, may be the most effective recipe for outstanding performance (18)."

If the purpose of participation in the athletic experience is to further a person's development, and a connection could be made between sport and success, why wouldn't the serious player be satisfied with just playing the game, without leagues, officials, spectators, record-keeping, awards, and atmospheres of confrontation? If character development were the objective, then the primary concern would be to match up teams and individuals on the basis of competitive parity, and let it go at that. But, that is not what happens, because personal development is not what interests serious players. Have you ever heard a

basketball player say: "I'm going over to the gym to get some character."? Domination, official recognition, social prestige, and ego infatuation are what athletes are more likely to be after.

Both unstructured play and organized sport can probably enhance or reinforce good qualities within an individual; however, there is evidence which indicates that negative human qualities are far more likely to surface in organized sport than in unstructured play. With the high visibility of professional, collegiate, and high school sports programs that throw honesty and integrity to the wind, there is a disturbing emphasis, throughout organized sport, on beating the system without getting caught. It is freely accepted that the "smart" player will explore every avenue and opportunity of rules circumvention to get a competitive edge on his or her opponent. Such circumvention includes the intent of the law, as well as its letter. Coaches teach the discriminate use of the elbow in basketball and the creative employment of the knockdown pitch in baseball. Spectators admire and encourage reckless play. Officials seem to miss many of the infractions, and ignore some of those they do see, because they're an accepted part of the game.

Cheating regularly occurs in the Soap Box Derby. Cars are to be built by contestants (the kids, themselves) at a cost not exceeding $75.00. But, some overzealous parents covertly have cars engineered for $20,000 (14). Richardson (19) and Webb (27) found that the more one is involved in highly competitive forms of sport, the more likely sportsmanship would take a secondary role to the pursuit of victory. Similarly, Feldman demonstrated that athletes and spectators displayed less desirable sportsmanship traits than non-athletes (6).

Rokosz studied the effects of officiating and extrinsic reward on participant judgment during basketball play. He found that player judgment in the self-calling of fouls is most impaired in the combined presence of officiating and rewards for winning. Conversely, player judgment in the calling of fouls is most favorable in a situation where no extrinsic reward is offered to the winner and players are responsible for officiating their own games. Furthermore, the presence or absence of officiating influences player judgment more so than does the offering or non-offering of an award for winning (22). The existence of rules, and the officials to enforce them, allows players to believe that they are absolved from the responsibility for their own ethical conduct. It is of little concern to the successful cheater that victory is attained unfairly, as long as it is sanctioned by the officials. People don't want to know how you

played the game. They want to know whether you won or lost. Interestingly, the rules of play don't even provide a significant opportunity for participants to make and communicate honest judgments. If a player admitted to committing a violation that an official missed, such admission would be ignored. During play which is not influenced by outside forces, cheating probably occurs infrequently; otherwise, the game would disintegrate, and it would lose its value.

In a noticeable number of instances, the atmosphere of organized sport turns normally rational people into irrational people. Many seem to develop biases, suspicions, postures of accusation, insensitivities, warped judgment, and false loyalties. Consider, for instance, the player who will defend an unscrupulous teammate against all comers, but will become an attacker the moment that person becomes a member of the opposition. Such behavior is standard, but it doesn't make sense. Does the worth of a person change upon the change of a uniform? Researchers Nelson and Kagan have found American children to be competitive to irrational degrees. Kids apparently achieve senses of accomplishment and/or satisfaction by simply preventing others from positive attainment. A competitive jealousy is formed (16). The highly competitive and "me first" atmosphere of American life and sport might be responsible.

Consider, too, a situation which occurred during a Mets-Giants baseball game early in the 1979 season, when the regular umpires were on strike. Mets runners were on first and third when the batter hit a long fly to center. The centerfielder, with his back to the plate, caught the ball for a split second, then dropped it. The second base umpire called the batter out; but the Mets runners, having seen the ball dropped, assumed the batter was still alive, and they continued running around the bases. The centerfielder picked the ball up, threw it to an infielder, who in turn threw it to first base for a double play. Naturally, the Mets argued that the ball was never caught; and, after consulting with another umpire, the second base umpire changed his decision. Now, it was time for the Giants to argue. After considerable debate, the umpires eventually decided to compromise. The batter was ruled out, the runner at first was allowed to return to that base, and the runner at third was allowed to score. The reaction by players, coaches, fans, and broadcasters to such a development was complete astonishment. Compromising decisions just isn't done. Yet, the umpires simply tried to do what seemed fair at the time. In the world of unstructured play, compromise is standard practice. What the umpires did would be viewed as common sense.

Researchers have found that, amongst both unstructured and organized players, most people endorse the fun and socialization aspects of play rather than the skill and winning aspects (10,12,27). They probably do so because they realize, in moments of objectivity, that having fun is, or should be, more important than winning. But, Moriarty and Holman, in studying Little League baseball teams, observed that sports participants' behavior did not support their expressed attitudes. Emphases in skillful performance and winning came to the forefront of people's consciousness under highly competitive conditions. Relative to the recreational play of youngsters, which was also observed, behaviors of organized competitors included higher frequencies of self-dissatisfaction, apathy, unhappiness, and hostility toward umpires and opponents. The conclusion was reached that the structure of play readily influences participant attitudes and behavior. Positive sociability and enjoyment stems from free play (15).

Although the structure of play is very influential in bringing forth players' attitudes and behaviors, a qualification must be made. The observances described herein apply to American society, although not exclusively. Much of what happens in sport can be attributed to the societal values in which it operates (11); so the situation in another culture, such as Japan's, provides a contrast to the American scene. In 1973, this author viewed a little league baseball game in Tokyo. It must have been opening day that Sunday morning because elaborate ceremonies took place before actual play began. While marshall music blared over loudspeakers, four teams of players marched onto the field in Olympic fashion. The players of each team were preceded by a young girl holding a sign on which the team name appeared. The adult spectators and umpires clapped to the beat of the music during the march-on. Thereafter, awards were presented, speeches made, and ceremonial pitches thrown by community leaders. With all the build-up and attention, one could only wonder what the effect would be on the behavior of the players and spectators. In America, many people would have been whipped into an emotional frenzy. The exact opposite happened in Tokyo. Players went through their paces almost stoically. Spectators didn't seem to take sides. They greeted good plays with applause and bad plays with polite chuckles. There was no screaming, yelling, or berating of umpires. As a matter of fact, there were times when umpires briefly stopped play to instruct players on the finer points of the game. The way the Japanese conduct themselves in sport matches their general conduct. They don't allow the structure of sport

to affect the way they treat each other, while the relationships between many Americans are either changed or intensified by organized sport.

In closing, it might be well to point out that amongst the primary goals of an educational institution are to "distinguish the humane person from the mere human being (13)" and to influence people to be at peace with themselves and with other people. Thus, the awakening of intramural personnel to the humanistic and developmental consequences of sports participation has produced a conflict in program evaluation standards. Just as credit-hour production now dominates academia, the statistics of how many people play, and how often, have dominated intramurals. Although administration officials cling to statistics for their tangibility, numbers no longer hold water as the chief evaluation tool, in light of the behavioral, psychological, and educational objectives now being embraced. The quality of the play experience, and the lessons learned in administering it, supersede in importance the number of people playing.

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